

The House passed the Fiscal Year 2008 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill late Thursday by a vote of 237 to 18. Jackson is a member of the House Appropriations Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee.

"We are putting low-income families first by strengthening food assistance programs that serve as our first line of defense against hunger. The agriculture spending bill makes huge investments in domestic food assistance programs, renewable energy grants and loans, and programs that protect public health," said Jackson.

The bill needs to be reconciled with the Senate version and then will be sent to the President for his signature.

Portions of the bill that benefit the state of Illinois include:

- \$2.9 million for the National Center for Food Safety and Technology (NCFST), at Illinois Institute of Technology. NCFST is a unique collaboration between government, academia and the food industry that develops methods to detect and prevent contamination of food.
- \$1.065 million to the Soybean Disease Biotechnology Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, to enable scientific advances in structural, comparative, and functional genomics and genetic engineering to protect soybean crops from diseases and to improve productivity.
- \$807,000 for the Livestock Genome Sequencing Initiative at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as part of an international effort to identify every gene of the cattle and swine species by its unique DNA sequence and location on specific chromosomes, and provide a database to identify the function of these genes.

Other items funded in the bill include:

- \$39. 8 billion for the Food Stamp program, an increase of \$1.7 billion. The bill excludes special pay for military personnel when determining benefits and also rejects the administrations proposal to restrict eligibility for food stamps by excluding needy families who are receiving certain other benefits.
- Restoration of the President's proposed cuts to the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, and fully funds the program at \$150 million. The bill also expands the program, which serves over 485,000 people monthly, to five new states.
- \$5.6 billion to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and an additional \$30 million to restore cuts to state grants to help administer the program.
- The expansion of the Simplified Summer School Food Program that provides up to two meals a day to children age 18 and under during the summer.